

# LAXART

3 June 2021

Dear Mayor Tecklenburg,

I am writing to you in my role as Director of [LAXART](#), a nonprofit visual-arts space in Los Angeles, California that utilizes contemporary art as a means of understanding key issues of our time. Following the actions of white supremacists Dylann Roof in Charleston in 2015 and James Alex Fields, Jr. in Charlottesville in 2017 as well as Bree Newsome's defiant climb to the top of a flagpole at the South Carolina Statehouse to remove the Confederate battle flag, dozens of monuments were removed and schools and streets were renamed across the South. By 2018, the debate sparked by the removal of these Confederate symbols led to the conception of MONUMENTS (working title), an exhibition I am co-curating with artist [Kara Walker](#) slated to open in Fall 2022 <sup>1</sup> at the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) (MOCA) in downtown LA.<sup>2</sup> Further, the events of this past summer have warranted an expansion of the exhibition's scope to encompass the prospect of reparations, healing, and a greater reckoning with America's past.

The Confederate monuments in front of courthouses and capitol buildings are physical manifestations of the Lost Cause belief. Formed in the wake of the Civil War, the Lost Cause contends that the South's secession from the Union and the ensuing bloodshed was not about slavery but rather, was courageously fought to defend states' rights from a tyrannical federal government in spite of the overwhelming odds against them. However, the Lost Cause is anything but an historical phenomenon; the depictions of average soldiers doing their civic duty, stately generals gallantly leading the charge, and faithful wives and mothers sacrificing their husbands and sons to the war effort were erected decades after the war's end and remained in place for decades after that. In the wake of the death of George Floyd, people are further questioning the meaning of these symbols. In a [June 2020 poll](#) by Quinnipiac University, 52% of voters support removing Confederate monuments from public spaces, up 19 points from August 2017. It is the monument's historical *and* its present day ideological bearing that needs to be investigated.

---

<sup>1</sup> Due to the shifting nature of COVID restrictions across the country, this date is subject to change.

<sup>2</sup> Though Los Angeles may seem an odd location for an exhibition about a largely Southern phenomenon, Los Angeles has its own interesting history with the Confederacy and MOCA's galleries are not far from where D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, another sort of Confederate monument, was filmed.

# LAXART

We have selected a group of recently decommissioned Civil War monuments from throughout the United States that we hope to put on display with the help of local and national municipalities as well as historical and art historical institutions.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, artists such as [Ja'Tovia Gary](#), [Torkwase Dyson](#), [Abigail Deville](#), [Natalie Ball](#), [Devóne Tines](#), and [Leonardo Drew](#) will create new artworks inspired by the historic monuments in order to confront and challenge long held beliefs about the real people behind these inanimate objects and the ways in which we can build a roadmap forward. In exhibiting a variety of monuments in an indoor gallery space, we are hoping to question the geographically specific context for these statues as well as the role they play in discussions about race, gender, censorship, and American history. How does collective memory differ from history and how should we decide who and what is worth celebrating, especially as public values change over time? What could "Reconstruction 2.0" look like, and how would it avoid the failures of the first? The questions addressed in the galleries will also serve as a basis for a robust series of public programming featuring contributions from art historians, politicians, journalists, scholars, poets, historians, and artists. These talks and panels will also be translated into a scholarly publication that will accompany the exhibition and provide broader context.

*John C. Calhoun* would be an excellent addition to this exhibition. Though he is not a Confederate figure, Calhoun played a pivotal role in the expansion and protection of slavery in the United States and supported South Carolina's secession in his final public speech. The historical record surrounding the creation of both this monument and the original version reflects the contentious nature of these types of monument from their inception. Additionally, the recent protests and subsequent actions taken by the Charleston City Council are an interesting case study into the ways in which communities grapple with questions of heritage and representation and how municipalities can rapidly respond to current events and the desires of their constituents.

We have contracted with [Methods & Materials, Inc.](#), a professional art handling company based out of Chicago, for shipment logistics. They specialize in rigging, transport, installation,

---

<sup>3</sup> To date, we have confirmed that Baltimore will lend us the four monuments they removed from around the city in 2017. We are in negotiations with the Briscoe Center for American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin; currently, we are awaiting approval of the University's recently appointed President. We have also put in requests with Richmond and Durham.

# LAXART

and de-installation of large sculptural works. They have worked with museums, art collectors, and municipalities throughout the country. All associated costs would be paid for, in full, by LAXART with funds from private donors as well as grants we have received from the [Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation](#) and [the Warhol Foundation](#).

I understand that these objects evoke strong emotions and dig deep into collective identity and belonging; this is precisely the reason why MONUMENTS and the questions it hopes to investigate are critically relevant. I am available to discuss the project and our intentions with any and all concerned individuals to tell them more about this project and to win supporters for this endeavor. We are hoping to broaden and deepen the discourse *from* all sides and *for* all sides as the issue is anything but black and white. We cannot do this without your help. Thank you so much for your consideration and I look forward to continuing the conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hamza Walker".

Hamza Walker



# LAXART

## MISSION

LAXART is a nonprofit visual art space that promotes developments in contemporary culture through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. We believe that contemporary art is a means of understanding key issues of our time with all their inherent contradictions. Contemporary art assumes many forms. Rather than provide answers, it raises questions. Through a range of offerings, we contextualize contemporary art both socially and art historically. Our programs are free and designed to be accessible to the general public.

## SELECTED PAST EXHIBITIONS

- (2020) [\*Some Reach While Others Clap\*](#) Post Commodity
- (2020) [\*Book Porn. A Series\*](#) Various
- (2019) [\*Relax Into the Invisible\*](#) Barbara Stauffacher
- (2019) [\*Tinselwood\*](#) Marie Voignier
- (2018) [\*I Can't Believe It's Not Battle!\*](#) Nira Pereg
- (2018) [\*Every Building in Baghdad\*](#) Rifat Chadirji
- (2017) [\*Work\*](#) Zarouhie Abdalian
- (2017) [\*Raphael Montanez Ortiz\*](#)
- (2017) [\*Reconstitution\*](#) Group Exhibition

## SELECTED PAST PROGRAMS

- (2019) [\*Lives of the Performers\*](#)
- (2019) [\*Women's Work with Scholastique Mukasonga + Randa Jarrar\*](#)
- (2019) [\*Name that Tune\*](#)
- (2019) [\*Zeena Parkins + Susan Alcorn\*](#)
- (2019) [\*Company. Company: Jérôme Bel\*](#)
- (2018) [\*What Constitutional Law Can Learn From Sculpture\*](#)
- (2018) [\*The Wakanda Effect: Black Panther & The Black Radical Imaginary\*](#)
- (2018) [\*Kim Gordon + Leila Bordreuil\*](#)
- (2018) [\*Alternative Spaces\*](#)

## ABOUT HAMZA WALKER

Hamza Walker is the Director of LAXART, an independent nonprofit art space in Los Angeles. From 1994–2016, he was the Director of Education and Associate Curator at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, a non-collecting museum devoted to contemporary art. In 2017 he co-curated (with Catherine Taft) “Reconstitution”, a group exhibition mounted at LAXART. In 2016 he co-curated (with Aram Moshayedi) “Made in L.A.” at the Hammer Museum, and in 2015 he curated “A Painting is a Painting isn’t a Painting” at the Kadist Foundation in San Francisco. His 2008 Renaissance Society exhibition “Black Is, Black Ain’t” was a previous winner of the Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award.

# LAXART

## ABOUT KARA WALKER

Born in Stockton, California in 1969, Walker studied at the Atlanta College of Art (BFA, 1991) and the Rhode Island School of Design (MFA, 1994). She is the recipient of many awards, notably the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1997 and the United States Artists, Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship in 2008. In 2012, Walker became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2015, she was named the Tepper Chair in Visual Arts at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Her work can be found in museums and public collections throughout the United States and Europe including The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Tate Gallery, London; the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI), Rome; and Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt. Walker's major survey exhibition, Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love, was organized by The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis where it premiered in February 2007 before traveling to ARC/ Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles; and the Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth. Recent solo exhibitions have been presented at the Art Institute of Chicago; Camden Arts Centre in London; and Metropolitan Arts Center (MAC) in Belfast. During the spring of 2014, Walker's first large scale public project, a monumental installation entitled *A Subtlety: Or... the Marvelous Sugar Baby an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant*, was on view at the abandoned Domino Sugar refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Commissioned and presented by Creative Time, the project – a massive sugar covered sphinx-like sculpture – responded to and reflected on troubled history of sugar. As a special project of the 2015 Venice Biennale, Walker was selected as director, set and costume designer for the production of Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* at Teatro La Fenice, Venice, Italy. Read more on Kara Walker at [www.karawalkerstudio.com](http://www.karawalkerstudio.com)





## **ABOUT METHODS & MATERIALS**

Established in Chicago in 1990, Methods & Materials, Inc., is dedicated to fine art rigging, assembly, installation, re-location, and de-installation of large-scale sculptures and objects, and to the careful handling of valuable artifacts. Our expertise and experience, along with our complete design, fabrication, and storage facilities, ensures that Methods & Materials will customize a safe, efficient, and economical solution specific to our clients' needs. We are proud to be a certified Women's Business Enterprise (WBE)

## **SERVICES**

### **Rigging & Specialized Handling**

No project is too large, heavy, or unwieldy for us. We have an extensive background in rigging, hoisting, and maneuvering large-scale objects both in-and outdoors. Our team will:

- Provide and operate the necessary equipment
- Source and rig alongside local crane companies
- Orchestrate lifting and installation plans
- Meet engineering specifications
- Execute complex installations safely and efficiency

### **Storage**

Our M&M's heated warehouse provides safe and cost-effective storage for sculpture and artifacts. When de-installing an art piece, we can offer on-site crate fabrication and transportation to our facility.

### **Installation**

Methods & Materials, Inc. has been installing permanent collections for galleries, museums, municipalities, corporations, and private collectors since 1990. We have the knowledge, experience, and professionalism necessary to oversee all aspects of your project including streamline communication between artists, museum staff, engineers, fabricators, architects, and installation team, specification and fabrication of mounts and installation methods, logistics and shipping arrangements, sourcing and/or fabricating hardware, and project management.

Temporary Our services provide venues with safe and efficient installation and de-installation of temporary exhibits. We offer either a full crew to expertly handle all facets of a project, or an Installation Supervisor to work with your perpetrators. We also provide consulting services in the early phases of exhibition/collection design, logistics and project planning, and transportation.

Traveling Exhibitions From fossils to locomotives, sarcophagi to totem poles, we have the know-how to handle the most challenging traveling exhibitions. We provide project management for traveling exhibitions and supply exhibit support services, including administration, and trucking; as well as rigging and installation/de-installation services.



## **Fabrication**

Crates Large-scale, custom crates and pallets can be hard to come by. We can assist in a turn-key operation when de-installing by crating and palletizing your sculptures, artifacts, etc. for storage and shipping.

Mounts When it comes to engineered solutions or custom-design substrates and hanging solutions, we can fabricate what your project may require. With fully operational metal and wood shops, we can build to your specifications.

## **SELECTED CLIENTS**

Art Institute of Chicago  
The British Museum  
Citibank NY  
City of Chicago  
Dietl International  
Driehaus Museum  
Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University  
The Field Museum  
Frederik Meijer Garden & Sculpture Park  
Kimbell Museum of Art  
National Museum of Mexican Art  
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts  
Museum of Modern Art  
Russell Bowman Art Advisory  
SculptureMilwaukee  
Smart Museum of Art  
Smithsonian institution  
Transportation Consultants International Inc.  
Zolla/Lieberman Gallery

## **SELECTED PROJECTS**

(2020) [Atmospheric Wave Wall](#) Olafur Eliasson at Willis Tower, Chicago  
(2020) [Constellation](#) Santiago Calatrava at River Point, Chicago  
(2020) [Chazen Mural](#) James Watrous at University of Wisconsin, Madison  
(2019) [All Equations Are Wave Equations](#) Alyson Shotz at Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga  
(2018) [Field Lines](#) Rob Ley at O'Hare International Airport, Chicago  
(2017) [Relocation of Museum Dioramas](#) at University of Minnesota, Falcon Heights





## **ABOUT MOCA**

**WE ARE A MUSEUM.**

We present, collect, preserve, and interpret the art of our time.

**WE ARE CONTEMPORARY.**

We question and adapt to the changing definitions of art.

**WE CARE.**

We make the experience of art accessible.

We embrace the inevitability of change.

We support the multiplicity of perspectives.

We encourage the urgency of contemporary expression.

Established in 1979, we are the only artist-founded museum in Los Angeles. We are dedicated to collecting and exhibiting contemporary art. We house one of the most compelling collections of contemporary art in the world, comprising roughly 7000 objects, and have a diverse history of ground-breaking, historically-significant exhibitions.

We are committed to the collection, presentation, and interpretation of art created after 1940, in all media, and to preserving that work for future generations. We provide leadership in the field by identifying and presenting the most significant and challenging art of our time, actively supporting the creation of new work, and producing original scholarship.

With two distinct venues in Los Angeles—MOCA Grand Avenue, and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA—and Michael Heizer's seminal artwork Double Negative (1969-70) in the Nevada desert, we engage audiences through an ambitious program of exhibitions, educational programs, and publishing.

## **ABOUT THE GEFFEN**

A former police car warehouse in L.A.'s Little Tokyo Historic District, renovated by the noted California architect Frank Gehry, The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (formerly The Temporary Contemporary) opened in 1983. This location offers 40,000 square feet of exhibition space.

WAREHOUSE Programming is open with an expanded bookstore, a reading nook, rest, meet, and workspaces with free WiFi, a coffee cart featuring drinks and food by Cafe Dulce, and several video installations. The current video works on view are by artists Fischli & Weiss and Mark Leckey. Over the course of the coming months, MOCA will be actively transitioning this space into a vibrant, multi-use anchor under the umbrella of WAREHOUSE Programs.





## SELECTED PAST GEFFEN EXHIBITIONS

- (2021) [\*abolitionist pod \(prototype\)\*](#) Crenshaw Dairy Mart
- (2019/20) [\*The Foundation of the Museum\*](#)
- (2018/9) [\*Laura Owens\*](#)
- (2018/9) [\*Survey\*](#) Zoe Leonard
- (2017/8) [\*The Theater of Disappearance\*](#) Adrián Villar Rojas
- (2017) [\*Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death\*](#) Arthur Jafa (Geffen)
- (2016/7) [\*Electric Earth\*](#) Doug Aitken
- (2015/6) [\*RIVER OF FUNDAMENT\*](#) Matthew Barney

## SELECTED PAST PROGRAMS

- (2021) [\*Creating the Compassionate City\*](#)
- (2021) [\*Uncommon Commons: What Can Public Art Do for Environmental Activism?\*](#)
- (2020) [\*Uncommon Commons: Who is the Public in Public Art\*](#)
- (2020) [\*Black Spring: Return from Exile\*](#)
- (2020) [\*For Freedoms Congress\*](#)
- (2019) [\*Earl Sweatshirt x MOCA\*](#)
- (2019) [\*LACMDS presents Slightly Guided Dance Party\*](#)
- (2019) [\*The Creative Thinking Project\*](#)
- (2018) [\*Vote For Your Lives Rally\*](#)
- (2018) [\*SCREEN: Community Cinema from Karachi to Los Angeles\*](#)
- (2018) [\*MOCA Community Day\*](#)
- (2018) [\*Architecture 101: Beyond Buildings\*](#)
- (2017) [\*MOCA Music: Bana Haffar & Stephanie Cheng Smith\*](#)
- (2017) [\*Anna Chave on Biography: Carl Andre\*](#)
- (2017) [\*The Idea of Sound with Terry Riley\*](#)
- (2016) [\*The Idea of the Oceans\*](#)
- (2016) [\*What is Contemporary? Black Lives Matter\*](#)